



# RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES



We all have rights and responsibilities to one another and to ourselves.

## What are rights and responsibilities?

**Human rights** are the basic things that most people agree every human being deserves to have or experience, no matter how rich or poor they are, or where they live.

**Human responsibilities** are those things that most people agree we have to do, or think about because they affect our life or someone else's, another living creature ... or our world.

Most people can be relied on to "do the right thing" by other members of society. But we also have international laws and agreements (also called things like "Conventions" or "Declarations") to help us respect people's rights and meet our responsibilities to them. There's even a special Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is just for children.

## What are some examples of rights?

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child identifies 42 different rights. But we generally think of every child as having the right to:

- Life
- Education
- Somewhere safe to live
- Warmth and food
- A name
- Clothing
- Personal safety and space
- Free speech and thought
- To be themselves (even if different)
- No discrimination (equal opportunity)



## What are some examples of responsibilities?

Responsibilities can be large or small. You might have them at home (like walking the dog, tidying your room), at school (doing an assignment), or in the wider world (obeying laws). Examples of some very general and large human responsibilities include:

- Following the laws and rules of our society or community
- Standing up for others and ourselves
- Respecting and protecting others
- Keeping ourselves and our environment safe and healthy

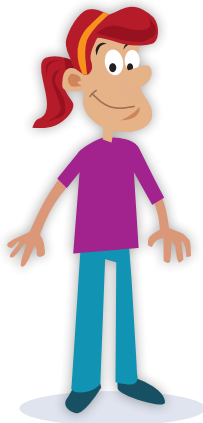
Can you find examples of other sorts of responsibilities?

## If someone doesn't accept or take on their responsibilities

- It's unfair and can make life harder for others, or even start to take away their rights
- It can have consequences for the person (like going to jail, being less successful or less happy; or being thought of as selfish or lazy by others)
- Other people might think they can act the same way ... and then everyone suffers

## Five freedoms

People sometimes refer to “freedom” – the power or right, to act, speak or think as we want without interference from others. The American social worker and psychotherapist Virginia Satir thought that every human should give themselves “five freedoms” to live a happy life. She based these freedoms on our five senses:



The freedom to see and hear what is here  
Instead of what should be, was or will be.

The freedom to say what one feels and thinks  
Instead of what one should.

The freedom to feel what one feels  
Instead of what one ought.

The freedom to ask for what one wants  
Instead of always waiting for permission.

The freedom to take risks on one's own behalf  
Instead of choosing only to be 'secure' and not rocking the boat.



What do you think of these five freedoms? How do they compare to rights?

## USEFUL LINKS

Community Law, Wellington and Hutt Valley, n.d. “The Rights Education Project (REP)”. Website at: <http://www.wclc.org.nz/the-rep-rights-education-project/> with modules and guides on legal rights on alcohol, drugs, family, sex, tenancy, etc.



## REFERENCES

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